

Get the Right Answer

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

When writing formulas, make sure the results will be calculated as you intended. Excel adheres to the standard order of precedence for calculations and calculates percentages, exponents, multiplication, and division in this order before calculating addition and subtraction. For example, =7+5*3 results in an answer of 22, not 36. To force a calculation to be completed before other calculations, place it inside parentheses: =(7+5)*3 will result in 36. If you're unsure how Excel is evaluating a formula, click on the cell and choose Tools | Formula Auditing | Evaluate Formula. Click on Evaluate to watch as each part of the formula is successively calculated.

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Auto-Expanding Chart Series

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

In earlier versions of Excel, it was difficult to create a chart that expands when data is added to the end of one or more of the series. Excel 2003's List feature solves this problem. To designate a data area as a list, click in a cell in the soon-to-be list, and choose Data | List | Create List. Then create your chart using the list data. Now, whenever you add new data to your list, the data area plotted by the chart expands automatically to include it.

One Page, One Chart

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

It's often handy to embed a chart on a worksheet near the data to which it relates. But sometimes you may want to print the chart on a page by itself. To do this, select any part of the chart, choose File | Print, and the chart will print on a page by itself.

See Charts in Black and White

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

Another handy feature when printing charts is the Preview command. You can print images in black and white by going to File | Print, clicking on the Preview button and then the Setup button, selecting the Chart tab, and then checking the Black and white box next to Print. The preview will now be in gray scale, letting you determine if the contrast is sufficient to distinguish the bars, lines, columns, and so on from one another.

Filenames in Footers

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

With Excel 2002, Microsoft added the ability to include the path to an Excel worksheet in its header or footer. The path is automatically updated if the file's location changes. Do this by selecting View | Header and Footer (or File | Page Setup | Header/Footer) and clicking on the Custom Header or Custom Footer button. The button with the folder icon adds the necessary code &[Path]&[File] to the selected area of the header or footer.

While you could select the path and filename from the list of preset headers/footers, a custom one lets you format the text and add an image, too.

Validate Information

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

Excel's Data Validation feature lets you limit the data that can be entered into a cell to what you specify as valid possibilities. For example, you can limit data to only whole numbers greater than 1,000. The Error alert you choose to use with the Data Validation rule has a significant bearing on whether or how easily invalid data can be entered. Only the Stop Style alert actually prevents invalid data being entered.

The other two options, Warning Style and Information Style, each warn that invalid data is about to be entered but allow the user to continue entering the data. The Warning Style option requires the user to select Yes to make the invalid entry. The Information Style option is less stringent, with a warning dialog that will accept the invalid data by default.

Custom Lists and Sorts

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

If you frequently enter the same data into a worksheet—a list of employee names, for example—you can speed up the process by creating a custom list. Choose Tools | Options and select the Custom Lists tab. Type the list in the List entries pane, one entry per line, and click on Add. You can also use the Import list from cells field to add a list that already appears in a workbook. Once you've created the list, you can type any of the list entries (one employee's name, for example) in any cell and then drag the fill handle to fill the selected cells with the remainder of the list entries.

You can also use a list to sort data in a worksheet: Go to Data | Sort and select the column containing the list entries, choose Options, and then choose your custom list from the First key sort order drop-down menu.

Configure Excel Defaults

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

Excel uses two template files, Book.xlt and Sheet.xlt, to control default settings for new workbooks and new worksheets that you add using the Insert | Worksheet command. By modifying and saving these documents, you can customize default settings. Sheet.xlt should contain only one worksheet, and you use it to configure options appropriate to individual worksheets, such as gridline color. Use Book.xlt to configure default options for entire workbooks, such as styles.

If you don't have either of these files (Excel works fine without them), you can easily create them. Create a new workbook and then save it with the appropriate name in the XLStart folder. For Office 2003, this is typically located in C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\Office11\XLStart.

Run a Macro Later

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

You can use the OnTime command to create macros that will run automatically at another time.

In our first example, we've created a timer so our macro will run after a certain amount of time has elapsed—in this case 5 seconds. We did this by specifying `Now + TimeValue (time)`. The value in parentheses defines the number of hours, minutes, and seconds before the macro should run.

```
Sub runMyApp1()
```

```
'run in 5 seconds
Application.OnTime Now + TimeValue ("00:00:05"), "showAlert"
End Sub

Sub showAlert()
MsgBox "Time's up!"
End Sub
```

You can also set the macro to run at a specific time. In our second example, runMyApp2 causes showAlert to run at 11:30 A.M. The time value in this scenario is based on a 24-hour clock, so 2:30 P.M., for example, would be 14:30.

```
Sub runMyApp2()
'run at 11:30am
Application.OnTime TimeValue("11:30:00"), "showAlert"
End Sub

Sub showAlert()
MsgBox "Time's up!"
End Sub
```

Process the Lot

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

When the aim of your macro is to process each cell in a range of cells, one after the other, you can do this using a `For` loop. For example, here is a macro that doubles the contents of every cell in the selected range (the error statement avoids problems where cells contain non- numeric data).

```
Sub processRange()
Dim myCell As Range
For Each myCell In Selection
On Error Resume Next
myCell.Value = myCell.Value * 2
Next myCell
End Sub
```

To adapt this example to your own needs, simply place your own code for processing cells between the `For Each myCell` and `Next myCell` statements.

Define Constant Values

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

Using the Name tool, you can define a constant, such as a tax rate, that you frequently use in Excel formulas. Go to Insert | Name | Define and type a name—TaxRate, for example. In the Refers to area, type the constant value and click on OK. For a 7 percent tax rate, you would enter 0.07. Now you can write a formula like =SalePrice*TaxRate and Excel will use the constant value you defined for TaxRate.

Find An Exact Match

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

To search for an exact match for an item in a table and return data only if the item is found, use a lookup formula with the FALSE argument. This argument will locate only exact matches, and it doesn't require the first column of the table to be sorted.

If your unsorted list is in the range A2:C5 and the value you need to look up is in cell A8, =VLOOKUP(A8,A2:

C5,2,FALSE) will return an exact match, even if it is in column B. If no match is found, an #N/A error will be displayed.

If all you need is the position of a matching item in the list, you can use the MATCH function. For example, =MATCH(A8,A2:A5,0) will return the item's position or an #N/A if a match is not found.

If you don't like the look of #N/A, you can use the IF function to create a friendlier message for when a match is not found:

=IF(ISNA(MATCH(A8,A2:A5,0)),"Not Found",MATCH(A8,A2: A5,0))

Similarly, if all you want to know is whether or not a match is found in the list, you can use the following statement:

=if(ISNA(MATCH(A8,A2:A5,0)),"Not Found", "Found")

Fast Formulas

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

Sometimes you need to copy a formula or data to a series of nonsequential cells. You can do this quickly without having to paste it into each cell individually. First copy the data from the source cell. Then hold down the Ctrl key as you click on each destination cell. Once all the cells are highlighted, you can paste the data by pressing Ctrl-Enter.

Similarly, you can type data into a series of cells. Again, while holding down the Ctrl key, click on all the cells you want to enter the text into. Next, type the text you are entering and then press Ctrl-Enter to add the text to all the selected cells.

Control Direction

May 4, 2004
By Helen Bradley

Here's a simple yet very handy tip. By default, the cell pointer moves down when you press Enter after entering data into a cell. But you can actually change the direction in which the cell pointer will move when you press Enter. Go to Tools | Options and go to the Edit tab. Check the box next to Move selection after Enter if it isn't already enabled, and choose the direction you want the pointer to move in from the drop-down menu. When working in a document, you can make the pointer move in the opposite direction from the one you've chosen by holding down Shift while you press Enter.

Excel Keyboard Shortcuts

May 4, 2004

F2: Edit a cell's contents.

Ctrl-1: Open the Format Cells dialog.

Ctrl-Page Up: Move to the next sheet in the workbook.

Ctrl-Page Down: Move to the previous sheet in the workbook.

Ctrl-Shift-": Copy the value from the cell above into the current cell.

Ctrl-': Copy the formula from the cell above into the current cell.

Ctrl-R: Fill contents of active cell into selected cells to the right.

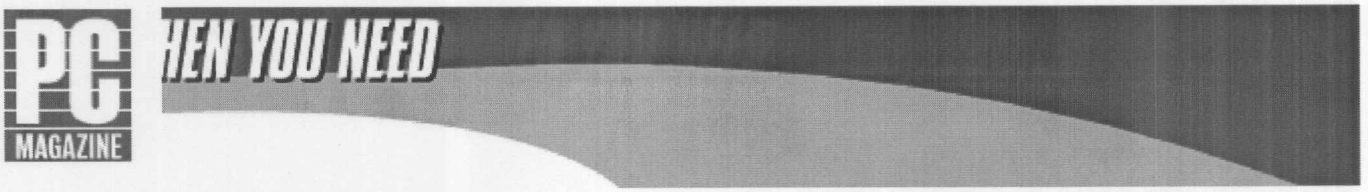
Ctrl-D: Fill contents of active cell into selected cells down.

Ctrl-`: Toggle between showing cell values and formulas in cells.

Ctrl-$: Set selection to currency format with two decimal places.

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Fast Access to Often-Used Documents

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

You can keep frequently used documents readily available on Word's menu bar so you don't have to use the File menu and search through files and folders to find them. You do this by adding a Work menu to Word's menu bar. Simply go to View | Toolbars | Customize, choose the Commands tab, and select Built-in Menus from the list of categories. Then choose Work from the list of commands and drag it to where you want it on the top-line menu. From your new menu, choose Add to work menu to attach a filename to the menu. To remove a filename, press Ctrl-Alt-Minus and click on the item you want to remove.

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Open the Last-Opened Document

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

You can create an icon on your desktop that will launch Word and automatically open the document you last opened. Either locate the file Winword .exe in Windows Explorer (for Office 2003, this is typically in C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\OFFICE11) or find it with the Search item on the Start menu (in the Search tool, you'll probably need to turn on More advanced options, then add checkmarks next to Search system folders and Search subfolders).

Once you find Winword .exe, right-click on the file icon and drag it to your desktop, and then select Create Shortcuts Here. Right-click on the new shortcut icon, choose Properties, and go to the Shortcut tab. In the Target field, after the existing file path, add a space and then /mFile1. You can also assign a shortcut key if you want to launch the file with a keystroke combination. When you're done, click on Apply. In the General tab, give the shortcut a descriptive name and click on OK.

Using the Paste Special Command

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

When you copy text from the Web or another document into a Word file, Word will reproduce the typeface, color, and font size displayed in the original page. If you want the pasted text to match the formatting in the destination document, use Edit | Paste Special, and choose Unformatted Text.

Rearrange Paragraphs With Two Keystrokes

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

Do you need to swap the second and third paragraphs in the document you're working on? Don't waste time dragging text around within your document using the mouse. Just click on the paragraph you'd like to move, hold down Shift-Alt, and move the paragraph up or down using the arrow keys. Each press of the arrow key causes the selected paragraph to jump over one adjacent paragraph.

Erase Private Information

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

Word documents contain hidden information that can provide clues to your identity and the identity of people to whom you e-mailed a file using Outlook. Word 97 goes so far as to retain logs of the last ten people who revised your document, often with easily extractable e-mail addresses. Unrevised versions of your text may also be hidden in your files. Microsoft has posted a Remove Hidden Data tool on its Web site, but this is cumbersome to use and doesn't remove all identity information. Before making a Word file public, you can thoroughly clean it by opening it in WordPad (located in Start | All Programs | Accessories) and saving the file in Rich Text Format. (Word can save to RTF but doesn't discard all the hidden information.) After you've saved the file, you can change its file extension from .rtf to .doc.

Drawing a Line

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

You can create a line across the page of your Word or Outlook document with just a few keystrokes. Type three consecutive hyphens and press Enter to get a normal line. Type three underscores and Enter, and you'll get a bold line. And if you type three equal signs and press Enter, you'll get a double line.

Word's Built-In Calculator

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

Did you know you can add a calculator to Word's toolbars or menus? Go to View | Toolbars | Customize and choose the Commands tab. In the list of categories, go to Tools, select Tools Calculate in the list of commands, and drag it to a toolbar or drop-down menu. After you drop the command on the toolbar or menu, immediately right-click on the command, choose Change Button Image from the pop-up menu, and choose the calculator icon.

You can use the same pop-up menu to specify whether to display text, an icon, or both in the toolbar. Now, type a simple calculation (try 2 + 2) in a Word document, highlight it, and click on the new icon or menu item. To replace the calculation with the result, just press Ctrl-V. Before you press Ctrl-V, note that the result appears in the status line at the bottom of the window.

Taming Squiggles and Smart Tags

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

Some of the features that are supposed to help you can just be downright annoying. Take those squiggly red and green underlines Word puts under words and sentences. Intended to point out spelling and grammatical errors, these are often wrong or inappropriate. To turn off the squiggly lines, choose Options from the Tools menu, select the Spelling & Grammar tab, then uncheck Check spelling as you type and Check grammar as you type.

Similarly, the Smart Tags that appear under dates, telephone numbers, pasted text, and so on can be distracting. You can choose AutoCorrect Options from the Tools menu, then select the Smart Tags tab to turn off individual features or all Smart Tag displays.

Fix Stubborn Formatting

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

Ever try to fix formatting that refuses to change? You can start with a clean slate by removing all formatting from the selection—select the block of text and press Ctrl-Shift-N.

Alternatively, you can use Word's Reveal Formatting task pane to modify the formatting. In Word 2003, just hit Shift-F1; in Word 2002, select Reveal Formatting from the Format menu.

When you click on an underlined link, an options dialog will display settings that you can modify. By checking the Distinguish style source option, you can view whether formatting was applied directly or via a style.

You can also see which styles are applied to multiple paragraphs. Choose either Normal or Outline under the View menu. Then select Options from the Tools menu, go to the View tab, and enter a value of 0.5 inches or more next to the field labeled Style area width. A panel at the left edge of the window will display the styles associated with each paragraph.

Click on the Status Bar

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

Unless you've turned the status bar off in Tools | Options (under the View tab), it will appear at the foot of Word windows. This displays information such as the current page and line. You can double-click on the Page and Ln indicators to bring up the Go To menu.

Other status menu items are toggles: Double-click on REC to access macro recording, TRK to start tracking changes, EXT to extend the selection, or OVR to switch the typing mode from insert to overwrite. You can also right-click on some of these to bring up options menus.

Customize AutoText

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

You've probably noticed that Word completes certain phrases, such as "Best Wishes," before you've finished typing. You can customize this list so that Word completes only the phrases you define. Select AutoCorrect Options from the Tools menu, then go to the AutoText tab. Delete any items you don't want to keep, then add names and phrases that you type often, such as your name, company, or address.

Compare Two Documents Side by Side

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

In Word 2003, you can compare documents side by side. Open two documents. Then, from the Window menu of one of them, select the Compare Side By Side command. If you have only two documents open, the command will automatically choose to compare them. If you have three or more documents open, you'll have to select which document to compare with the current file.

A floating toolbar with two buttons will open. If the button on the left is selected, Word will scroll both documents at the same time. Press the button on the right side of the toolbar to return to where the cursor was located when you started comparing.

Edit Two Parts of a Document

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

Are you worried about the consistency of your introduction and conclusion? A spectacular yet underused feature is Word's ability to display two different parts of a document at the same time. To do this, you can either select the Split option from the Window menu to display a dividing line in the current window. Alternatively, you can drag down the tiny divider tool at the top of the right scroll bar. You can navigate to different parts of the document in each pane and use F6 to jump between them.

Smarter Navigation

May 4, 2004
By Edward Mendelson

Many Word users know that the up-and-down double arrows at the foot of the vertical scroll bar will page up and down through an open document. Fewer, however, know that the little dot icon between those arrows, called the Select Browse Object button, lets you change the function of the double-arrow buttons and of the Ctrl-PgUp and Ctrl-PgDn key combinations. You can, for example, choose to browse by heading, so the buttons will automatically jump you up or down to the next heading. Other choices let you browse by footnote, endnote, comment, graphic, or table.

Word Keyboard Shortcuts

May 4, 2004

Shift-F3: Toggle selected text between lowercase, initial capitals, and uppercase.

F4: Repeat your last action, including searching, typing, and formatting.

Shift-F4: Repeat the most recent Find command.

Shift-F5: Jump to the last change you made in the document.

Ctrl-F6: Toggle between open documents.

Alt-mouse click: Open the Research pane with information on the word or name you clicked on.

F7: Run the spell-checker.

F12: Open the Save As dialog.

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Zoom in and Out

May 4, 2004
By Laura Delaney

You can use the scroll button on your mouse to zoom in and out of documents quickly. Just hold down the Ctrl key and roll the scroll wheel forward to get a closer view of the document, or roll it back to shrink it.

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Fast Formatting

May 4, 2004
By Laura Delaney

One of our favorite hidden gems is the Format Painter. This Paintbrush icon should appear by default on the standard toolbar. To add it to the toolbar, go to *Tools* | *Commands*, navigate to *Format*, and drag the Paintbrush icon to a toolbar.

When you click on this icon, Format Painter copies the text formatting of the area where the cursor is located. If you select an entire paragraph or cell and then click on the icon, Format Painter will also copy the paragraph or cell formatting. You can then "paint" the copied formatting into other parts of the document by simply highlighting text.

By double-clicking on the Format Painter icon, you can apply the copied formatting repeatedly until you press Esc.

More File Options

May 4, 2004
By Laura Delaney

If you hold down the Shift key while selecting the File menu in Word (or in Outlook when composing a message), the menu options change. You get handy options to Save All and Close All open files. In Excel, you get a Close All—but not a Save All—option.

Line Breaks Without Bullets

May 4, 2004
By Laura Delaney

When you're creating a bulleted or numbered list in Word or PowerPoint, you might want an item to appear on the list without a bullet. You can start a new line without a bullet by pressing Shift-Enter. The next time you press the Enter key, the new line will continue the bulleted or numbered list. Another useful trick: In Excel, you can press Alt-Enter to start a new line within a cell.

Use Autocorrect to Add Symbols

May 4, 2004
By Laura Delaney

The AutoCorrect feature in Office can automatically place symbols in your documents. Here are some of our favorites.

(c) will do this: ©

(r) will do this: ®

(tm) will do this: ™

==> will do this: Ë

<== will do this: Á

--> will do this: →

<-- will do this: ←

Understanding Smart Tags

May 4, 2004
By Laura Delaney

Smart Tags, which were introduced in Microsoft Office XP, are small XML-based icons that dynamically appear above or below data when an action is possible. Some Smart Tags are specific to an application, like Stock Symbol Smart Tags in Excel, or to a specific type of data, like a name or address in Word or Outlook. The most universal is the Paste Options Smart Tag, which appears whenever data is pasted into any Office application.

To ensure that the Smart Tags option is active, select AutoCorrect Options in the Tools menu in any Office application and click on the Smart Tags tab. Make sure the Label text with smart tags box is checked. There you will find numerous recognizers such as address, financial symbol, person name, and others, as well as a choice to remove Smart Tags altogether. Keep in mind that these choices will affect all Office applications where Smart Tags are an option.

Paste options: After pasting data in any Office application, clicking on the Smart Tag (which looks like a clipboard) will open up a menu with numerous formatting choices, including Match Destination Formatting (which will format the data being pasted in the same way as the rest of the document) and Keep Source Formatting (which will keep the text being pasted in the same format it had in the source document).

Address Smart Tags: Certain Smart Tags can perform handy actions. For example, if you type the name of one of your Outlook contacts into a Word document, a Smart Tag will provide options to send e-mail, open the contact information (if it exists), insert the person's address, or schedule a meeting. Smart Tags associated with an address include options to add the address to your contact list and to display either a map or driving directions (which automatically brings you to http://mappoint.msn.com).

Excel error-checking: Error-checking Smart Tags in Excel appear when a cell entry violates a set of rules for a function or formula. The choices offered help users spot possible errors in calculations and enable them to correct the errors or change the error-checking options.

Stock symbol: The Stock Symbol Smart Tag in Excel recognizes stock symbols and lets users get information from MSN MoneyCentral.

Other Smart Tags: Microsoft has provided an API for developers to build custom Smart Tags. Others are available on the Web. You can see a list of the ones currently available by clicking on More Smart Tags in the Smart Tags dialog box.

General Office Keyboard Shortcuts

May 4, 2004

Ctrl-C: Copy selection.

Ctrl-X: Cut selection.

Ctrl-V: Paste copied selection.

Ctrl-Shift->: Increase font size.

Ctrl-Shift-<: Decrease font size.

Alt-F11: Open Visual Basic for Applications.

Alt-Shift-F10: Display Smart Tag options.

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